

Samuel Miller Building  
420 King Street  
Alexandria  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-671

HABS  
VA  
7-ALEX,  
143-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## SAMUEL MILLER BUILDING

HABS  
VA  
7-ALEX,  
143-

Location: 420 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia

Present Owner: Demolished in 1968 by the Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority as part of an urban renewal project in the old commercial center of Alexandria.

Statement of Significance: Awkwardly designed and of modest proportions, this structure is, however, a necessary element in the line-up of commercial buildings that defined the commercial thoroughfare of King Street.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

## 1. Date of erection: c. 1850

As suggested in the memorandum on 416-418 King Street (HABS report VA-670), the building at 420 King street (and a twin at 422 King street) were probably erected around 1850. In the history of the land parcel on which this building stood, Mordecai Miller and his wife conveyed to Joseph Tidball of Winchester, Virginia, on August 29, 1803, for the payment of an annual ground rent of \$133.33 silver dollars, the lot of ground on which 420 and 422 King Street were later erected:

Begin on the south side of King street at the western line of that piece of ground of which James Kirk died siezed;

West on King street one-fourth of the length of lot 113 /30 feet 10 1/4 inches/;

South parallel to Pitt street to the southern line of lot 113, said to be 178 feet 4 inches;

East parallel to King street the length of the first line to the line of Kirk;

With Kirk's line to the Beginning.

On September 30, 1805, Joseph Tidball and his wife of Frederick County, Virginia, conveyed the property to Isaac Edmondson of Baltimore for \$2,500, Edmondson to assume the payment of the annual ground rent to Mordecai Miller.

On January 10, 1816, Isaac Edmondson conveyed the property to Robert McCrea and William Gregory for \$1,500, still

subject to the annual ground rent.

Robert McGrea, by that time "of the City of New York," acquired William Gregory's interest in the property on July 6, 1827, for \$1,166.66.

After McGrea's death in New York, where his will was recorded, his executors, on June 25, 1838, conveyed the property to Samuel Miller, one of the sons of Mordecai Miller, for \$2,000, describing it as a "tenement and lot of ground."

2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: Samuel Miller was the first owner; J. F. Grigg was the second owner. Subsequent owners unknown.

The executors of Samuel Miller's estate, on April 21, 1877, conveyed to J. F. Grigg for \$2,210, a lot of ground with "a two-story brick store house and back building thereon, situated on the south side of King street between Pitt and Royal streets, known as No. 108 King street, being the eastern half of the lot of ground conveyed to Miller" on June 25, 1838. (Underlining supplied.) Thus the property was divided between 1838 and 1877.

B. Bibliography:

Alexandria Deed Books G (Circuit Court), p. 311; K (Circuit Court), p. 403; Q-2, p. 240 and 254; Y-2, p. 236; and 6, p. 270.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

This two-bayed, two-storied building appears to be loaded on the right because of the placement of the windows at the second story.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Two stories, two bays.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick, common bond.
3. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main shopfront is composed of

a recessed entranceway flanked by shopwindows. It is a later alteration dating from the late nineteenth century or early twentieth.

- b. Windows and shutters: The two windows at the second floor are topped by splayed lintels with keystones.

4. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable with end parapets.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A modillioned cornice with large consoles at either end crowns the building with "420" embossed in the entablature.

C. Site:

The building faces northward along King Street.

Prepared by Mrs. Hugh B. Cox of  
The Historic Alexandria  
Foundation  
June 1968  
Edited by  
Antoinette J. Lee  
November 1975

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken in 1968 to document the commercial and residential buildings of downtown Alexandria which were to be demolished in an urban renewal project. The project was cosponsored by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and the Historic American Buildings Survey. Mrs. Hugh B. Cox was the historian and George Eisenman supplied the photographs. The material was edited and updated in 1975 by Antoinette J. Lee, working on contract for HABS.